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BREAKING NEWS

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## Makoko boils: Three feared dead as Police, hoodlums clash

on June 13, 2014 / in **News** 2:41 am / [Comments](#)

By EVELYN USMAN

LAGOS — Commercial activities were brought to an abrupt end in **Makoko area of Lagos, yesterday**, as protesting youths allegedly attacked policemen who were in the area to execute a court order on demolition of parts of the area.

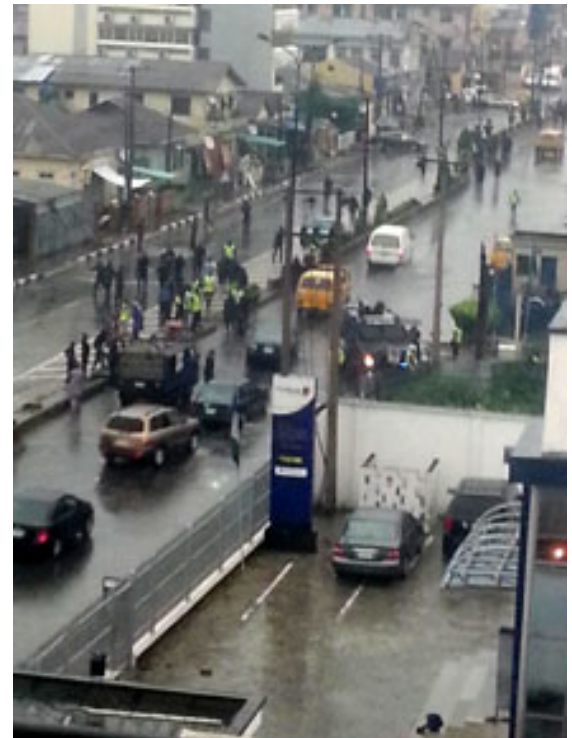
<http://dvs13w2q45hb8.cloudfront.net/wp-content/uploads/2014/06/fight.jpg> **Three** persons were reportedly feared dead in the fight that extended to Herbert Macaulay Street and the Adekunle end of Third Mainland Bridge. But the Police said no lives were lost.

Seven policemen, as gathered, sustained bullet wounds while others reportedly fled the scene when it became apparent that the youths may overpower them.

The demolition

The state government, two years ago, began demolition of the coastal community occupied mainly by fishermen, claiming that the structures did not observe the mandatory 100 metres setback from a powerline installed on the lagoon.

The demolition was, however, extended beyond the lagoon, thereby displacing over 3,000 families .



The action which was kicked against by a team of human rights activists on the ground that the residents were only given just 72-hour quit notice, resulted in a peaceful protest by the residents during which one of the traditional rulers, identified as Timothy Hunpoyanwa, was shot dead by a Police Corporal, one Pepple Boma, attached to the Marine Police,

Oworonshoki .

His death sparked off another protest during which there was a call for the prosecution of the killer policeman as well as urging the Lagos State Government to compensate the family of the murdered community leader.

However, acting on a purported court order yesterday, a team of policemen were said to have stormed the area at about 8 am to provide security for officials that would carry out the demolition exercise, only to be taken unawares by the residents.

Eye witnesses said dangerous weapons were used. An unconfirmed report alleged that the policemen fired some shots at the rampaging youths.

Hoodlums were said to have hijacked the moment, as they reportedly vandalised vehicles plying the route and also looted shops in the area.

#### Eye-witness accounts

An eye witness, who identified himself simply as Wemimo, described the demolition as a trespass on Federal Government land.

He said: "The Policemen were not attacked by youths residing in the area that is to be demolished. Nobody knew where the attackers came from.

"We were only attracted by gun shots and in the process we all took to our heels. We were later told that the gunshots were from policemen.

"The demolition started in 2012, after we were given just 72-hour quit notice. They pasted the notice at Makoko on Friday, July 20, 2012 to prevent the owners from seeking redress in court. Before the expiration of the illegal ejection, the Lagos State Government took the law into its hand by engaging in the demolition of houses without a court order.

"Today (yesterday), they came again wanting to continue from where they stopped two years ago."

#### Hoodlums on rampage

Another eye witness, who gave his name as Kunle Kolawole, said: "We were going about our daily activities when the fracas started. We waved it off at first because something similar occurred two weeks back but it was contained.

"Then all of a sudden these hoodlums went on rampage, even when a team of policemen came and tried to restore peace, they fought back.

"It was a full blown war between them and the police and we all ran to safety because they were shooting indiscriminately. Soon, the hoodlums started vandalising cars and shops.

However, the Police later reinforced and subdued them but the harm had been done. It was after peace had been restored that we saw some corpses around. I don't know if they were that of the hoodlums or bystanders. The corpses were later taken away by the Police."

## Seven Policemen

injured

Contacted, spokesperson for the Lagos State Police Command, Ngozi Braide, said: “Policemen at Makoko at about 8am today (yesterday) went to execute a court order on demolition of certain area of Makoko.

“Youths of that area on sighting the policemen mobilised and launched an attack on them. They were armed with guns and other dangerous weapons like cutlasses, bottles, daggers, rods and sticks. Seven policemen sustained pellet injuries and are receiving treatment now.

“At this juncture, Police decided to withdraw to avoid innocent casualties. Security is heightened in the area and normalcy has returned, but no life was lost.”

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